

Act III.

MAHOMET.

Scene 1.



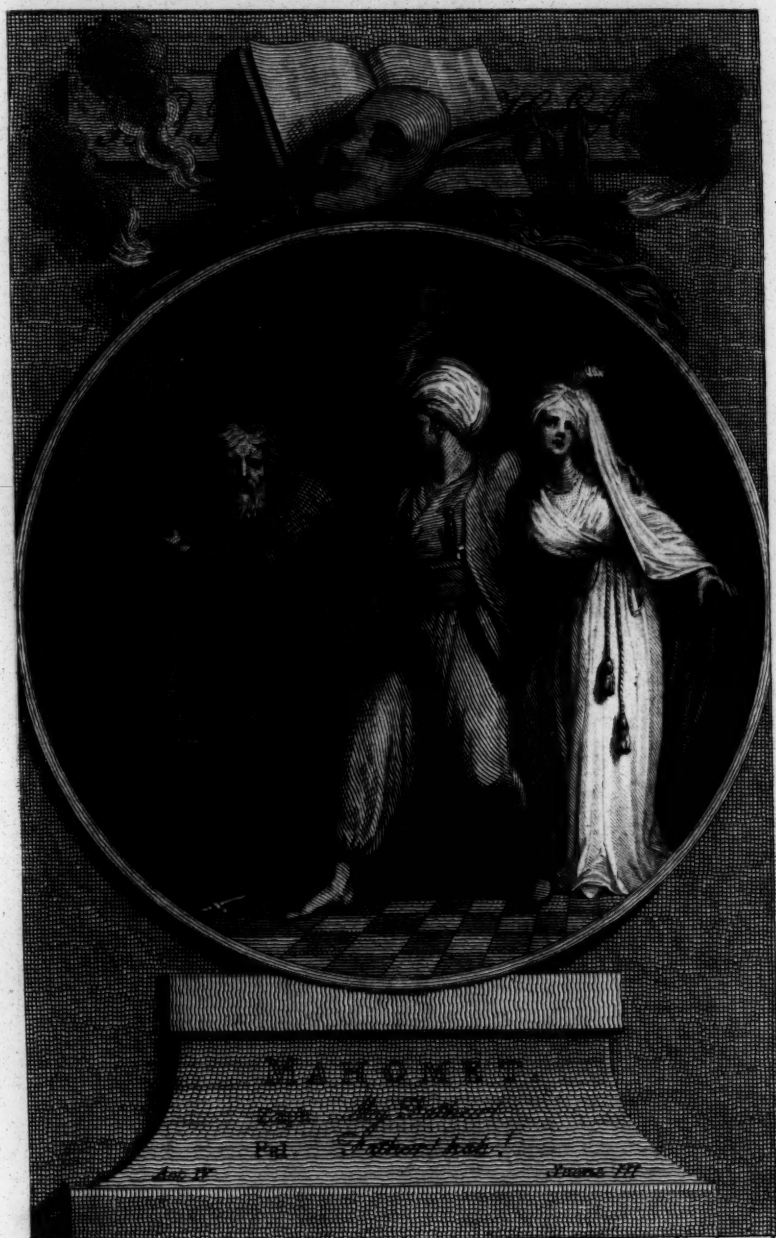
De Wilde pinx.

Larrey sculp.

MISS WALLIS as PALMIRA.

Pal. *Tremble Kaphna !*

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MAHOMET.

A
TRAGEDY,

BY THE REV. MR. MILLER.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,
AS PERFORMED AT
THE THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,
By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

LONDON:

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-M DCC XCVI

1795



TO THE RIGHT HON.
EDWARD SOUTHWELL.

SIR,

It was the design of my deceased husband to have presented this Piece to you. As it was always my duty and inclination to obey his commands whilst living, so I still find a secret satisfaction (though after his death) in performing what he intended.

That he might not put a trifle into your hands, he waited for the opinion of the Town, and now that has been favourable, it has fallen to my disconsolate office to make the melancholy offering.

In my unfortunate circumstances, it cannot be expected (though I were capable) that I should speak either to the merits of the Piece or of the Patron; the former may possibly want a recommendation to the world, but I have often heard my husband say the latter did not.

What I have more to add is, that you would be pleased to receive this as the last testimony of his esteem and gratitude from the hands of his

Disconsolate wife,

DOROTHY MILLER.

PROLOGUE.

*To point what lengths credulity has run,
What counsels shaken, and what states undone,
What hellish fury wings th' enthusiast's rage,
And makes the troubled earth one tragic stage ;
What blasphemies imposture dare advance,
And build what terrors on weak ignorance ;
How fraud alone rage to religion binds,
And makes a Pandemonium of our minds :
Our Gallic bard, fir'd with these glorious views,
First to his Crusade led the Tragic Muse,
Her pow'r through France his charming numbers bore,
But France was deaf—for all her priests were sore.*

*On English ground she makes a firmer stand,
And hopes to suffer by no hostile hand :
No clergy here usurp the free-born mind,
Ordain'd to teach, and not enslave mankind ;
Religion here bids persecution cease,
Without all order, and within all peace ;
Truth guards her happy pale with watchful care,
And frauds, though pious, find no entrance here.*

*Religion, to be sacred, must be free ;
Men will suspect—where bigots keep the key :
Hooded and train'd like hawks th' enthusiasts fly,
And the priests' victims in their pounces die :
Like whelps born blind, by mother-church they're bred,
Nor wake to sight to know themselves misled ;
Murder's the game—and, to the sport unprest,
Proud of the sin, and in the duty blest,
The layman's but the bloodhound of the priest.*

*Whoe'er thou art that dar'st such themes advance,
To priest-rid Spain repair, or slavish France,
For Juda's hire there do the devil's task,
And trick up slav'ry in religion's mask ;
England still free no surer means requires
To sink their sottish souls and damp their martial fires.*

*Britons ! these numbers to yourselves you owe ;
Voltaire hath strength to shoot in Shakspeare's bow ;
Fame led him at his Hyppocrene to drink,
And taught to write with Nature as to think :
With English freedom, English wit he knew,
And from the inexhausted stream profusely drew :
Cherish the noble bard yourselves have made,
Nor let the frauds of France steal all our trade.
Now of each prize the winner has the wearing,
E'en send our English stage a privateering ;
With your commission we'll our sails unfold,
And from their loads of dross import some gold.*

Dramatis Personae.

COVENT-GARDEN.

Men.

MAHOMET,	-	-	-	Mr. Aickin.
MIRVAN,	-	-	-	Mr. Fearon.
ALI,	-	-	-	Mr. Gardner.
HERCIDES,	-	-	-	Mr. Macready.
AMMON,	-	-	-	Mr. Thompson.
ZAPHNA,	-	-	-	Mr. Holman.
ALCANOR,	-	-	-	Mr. Wroughton.
PHARON,	-	-	-	Mr. Hull.

Women.

PALMIRA,	-	-	-	Mrs. Merry.
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MAHOMET.

ACT I. SCENE I.

*An Apartment in the Temple of Mecca. Enter ALCANOR
and PHARON.*

Alcanor.

PHARON, no more—shall I
Fall prostrate to an arrogant impostor?
Homage in Mecca once I banish'd thence,
And incense, the delusions of a rebel!
No—blast Alcanor, righteous Heaven! if e'er
This hand, yet free and uncontaminate,
Shall league with fraud, or adulate a tyrant.

Pha. August and sacred chief of Ishmael's senate,
This zeal of thine, paternal as it is,
Is fatal now—our impotent resistance
Controls not Mahomet's unbounded progress,
But without weak'ning irritates the tyrant.
When once a citizen you well condemn'd him
As an obscure seditious innovator;
But now he is a conq'ror, prince, and pontiff,
Whilst nations numberless embrace his laws,
And pay him adoration—even in Mecca
He boasts his proselytes.

Alca. Such proselytes

Are worthy of him—low untutor'd reptiles,
In whom sense only lives—most credulous still
Of what is most incredible.

Pha. Be such

Disdain'd, my lord; but may n't the pest spread upwards
And seize the head—Say, is the senate sound?
I fear some members of that rev'rend class
Are marked with the contagion, who, from views
Of higher power and rank,
Worship this rising sun, and give a sanction
To his invasions.

Alca. If, ye powers divine!

Ye mark the movements of this nether world,
And bring them to account, crush, crush those vipers,
Who, singled out by a community
To guard their rights, shall, for a grasp of ore
Or paltry office, sell 'em to the foe!

Pha. Each honest citizen, I grant, is thine,
And grateful for thy boundless blessings on them,
Would serve thee with their lives; but the approach
Of this usurper to their very walls
Strikes them with such a dread, that even these
Implore thee to accept his proffer'd peace.

Alca. Oh, people lost to wisdom as to glory!
Go, bring in pomp, and serve upon your knees
This idol, that will crush you with its weight.
Mark, I abjure him: by his savage hand
My wife and children perish'd, whilst in vengeance
I carry'd carnage to his very tent,
Transfix'd to earth his only son, and wore
His trappings as a trophy of my conquest.
This torch of enmity thus lighted 'twixt us
The hand of time itself can ne'er extinguish.

Pha. Extinguish not, but smother for a while
Its fatal flame, and greatly sacrifice
Thy private sufferings to the public welfare.
Oh say, Alcanor, wert thou to behold
(As soon thou may'st) this fam'd metropolis
With foes begirt, behold its pining tenants
Prey on each other for the means of life,
Whilst lakes of blood and mountains of the slain
Putrify the air,
And sweep off thousands with their pois'nous steams;
Would thy slain children be aveng'd by this?

Alca. No, Pharon, no; I live not for myself:
My wife and children lost, my country's now
My family.

Pha. Then let not that be lost.

Alca. 'Tis lost by cowardice.

Pha. By rashness often.

Alca. Pharon, desist.

Pha. My noble lord, I cannot,
Must not desist, will not, since you're possess'd
Of means to bring this insolent invader
To any terms you'll claim.

Alca. What means?

Pha. Palmira,
That blooming fair, the flower of all his camp,
By thee borne off in our last skirmish with him,
Seems the divine ambadress of peace,
Sent to procure our safety. Mahomet
Has by his heralds thrice propos'd her ransom,
And bade us fix the price.

Alca. I know it, Pharon:
And would'st thou then restore this noble treasure
To that Barbarian? "Wouldst thou for the frauds,

“ The deaths, the devastations, he brings on us
“ Enrich his ruffian hands with such a gem,”
And render beauty the reward of rapine?—
Nay, smile not, friend, nor think that at these years,
Well travell’d in the winter of my days,
I entertain a thought tow’rds this young beauty
But what’s as pure as is the western gale
That breathes upon the uncropt violet.

Pha. My lord—

Alca. This heart, by age and grief congeal’d,
Is no more sensible to love’s endearments
Than are our barren rocks to morn’s sweet dew
That balmy trickles down their rugged cheeks.

Pha. My noble chief, each master-piece of nature
Commands involuntary homage from us.

Alca. I own a tenderness unfelt before,
A sympathetic grief with ardent wishes
To make her happy fill’d my widow’d bosom :
I dread her being in that monster’s power,
And burn to have her hate him like myself.
’Twas on this hour, I at her modest suit,
Promis’d her audience in my own pavilion.
Pharon, go thou mean-while and see the senate
Assembled straight—I’ll sound ’em as I ought.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.

Changes to a Room of State. Enter PALMIRA.

Pal. What means this boding terror that usurps,
In spite o’ me, dominion o’er my heart,
“ Converting the sweet flower of new-blown hope

"To deadly nightshade, pois'ning to my soul
 "The fountain of its bliss?"—Oh, holy prophet!
 Shall I ne'er more attend thy sacred lessons?
 Oh, Zaphna! much-lov'd youth! I feel for thee
 As for myself—But hold, my final audit
 Is now at hand—I tremble for th'event!
 Here comes my judge—Now, liberty or bondage?

Enter ALCANOR.

Alca. Palmira, whence those tears? trust me, fair maid!
 Thou art not fallen into barbarians' hands;
 What Mecca can afford of pomp or pleasure,
 To call Attention from Misfortune's lap,
 Demand and share it.

Pal. No, my generous victor!
 My suit's for nothing Mecca can afford;
 Pris'ner these two long months beneath your roof
 I've tasted such benignity and candor,
 Whilst your own hands so labour'd to beguile
 The anxious moments of captivity,
 That oft I've call'd my tears ingratitude.

Alca. If ought remains that's in my power to smooth
 The rigour of your fate, and crown your wishes,
 Why, 'twould fill
 The furrows in my cheeks, and make old age
 Put on its summer's garb.

Pal. Thus low I bless thee. [*Kneeling.*]
 It is on you, on you alone, Alcanor,
 My whole of future happiness depends;
 Have pity then;
 Pity, Alcanor, one who's torn from all
 That's dear or venerable to her soul;

Restore me then, restore me to my country,
Restore me to my father, prince, and prophet.

Alca. Is slav'ry dear then? is fraud venerable?
What country? a tumultuous wand'ring camp!

Pal. My country, sir, is not a single spot
Of such a mould, or fix'd to such a clime;
No, 'tis the social circle of my friends,
The lov'd community in which I'm link'd,
And in whose welfare all my wishes centre.

Alca. Excellent maid! then Mecca be thy country.
Robb'd of my children, would Palmira deign
To let me call her child, the toil I took
To make her destiny propitious to her
Would lighten the rough burthen of my own:
But no; you scorn my country and my laws.

Pal. Can I be yours when not my own? Your bounties
Claim and share my gratitude—But Mahomet
Claims right o'er me of parent, prince, and prophet.

Alca. Of parent, prince, and prophet! Heavens! that robber,
Who, a scap'd felon, emulates a throne,
And scoffer at all faiths proclaims a new one!

Pal. Oh, cease, my lord; this blasphemous abuse
Of one whom millions with myself adore
Does violence to my ear; such black profaneness
'Gainst Heaven's interpreter blots out remembrance
Of favours past, and nought succeeds but horror.

Alca. Oh, superstition! thy pernicious rigours,
Inflexible to reason, truth, and nature,
Banish humanity the gentlest breasts.
Palmira, I lament to see thee plung'd
So deep in error——

Pal. Do you then reject
My just petition? can Alcanor's goodness

Be deaf to suff'ring virtue?
 Name but the ransom,
 And Mahomet will treble what you ask.

Alca. There is no ransom Mahomet can offer
 Proportion'd to the prize. Trust me, Palmira,
 I cannot yield thee up. What! to a tyrant
 Who wrongs thy youth, and mocks thy tender heart
 With vile illusions and fanatic terrors!

Enter PHARON.

What wouldst thou, Pharon?

Pha. From yon' western gate,
 Which opens on Moradia's fertile plains,
 Mahomet's general, Mirvan, hastes to greet thee.

Alca. Mirvan, that vile apostate!

Pha. In one hand
 He holds a scimitar, the other bears
 An olive branch, which to our chiefs he waves,
 An emblem of his suit—a martial youth,
 Zaphna by name, attends him for our hostage.

Pal. [*Apart.*] Zaphna! mysterious Heaven!

Pha. Mirvan advances
 This way, my lord, to render you his charge.

Alca. "Mirvan, advance! how dare the traitor see me?"
 Palmira, thou retire—Pharon, be presents [*Exit Pal.*]

Enter MIRVAN.

After six years of infamous rebellion
 Against thy native country, dost thou, Mirvan,
 Again profane with thy detested presence
 These sacred walls which once thy hands defended,
 But thy bad heart has vilely since betray'd?
 Thou poor deserter of thy country's gods,

Thou base invader of thy country's rights,
What wouldst thou have with me ?

Mir. I'd pardon thee——

Out of compassion to thy age and suff'rings,
And high regard for thy experienc'd valour.
Heaven's great apostle offers thee in friendship
A hand could crush thee, and I come, commission'd
To name the terms of peace he deigns to tender.

Alca. He deigns to tender ! insolent impostor !
Dost thou not, Mirvan, blush
To serve this wretch—this base of soul as birth ?

Mir. Mahomet's grandeur's in himself ; he shines not
With borrowed lustre.

Plunged in the night of prejudice, and bound
In fetters of hereditary faith,
My judgment slept : but when I found him born
To mould anew the prostrate universe,
I started from my dream, join'd his career,
And shar'd his arduous and immortal labours.
Once, I must own, I was as blind as thou ;
Then wake to glory, and be chang'd like me.

Alca. What death to honour wak'ning to such glory !

Pha. Oh, what a fall from virtue was that change !

Mir. Come, embrace our faith, reign with Mahomet,
And, cloth'd in terrors, make the vulgar tremble.

Alca. 'Tis Mahomet, and tyrants like to Mahomet,
'Tis Mirvan, and apostates like to Mirvan,
I only would make tremble——Is it, say'st thou
Religion that's the parent of this rapine,
This virulence and rage ?—No ; true religion
Is always mild, propitious, and humane,
Plays not the tyrant, plants no faith in blood,
Nor bears destruction on her chariot wheels,

But stoops to polish, succour, and redress,
And builds her grandeur on the public good.

Mir. Thou art turn'd Christian sure! some straggling monk
Has taught thee these tame lessons——

Alca. If the Christians
Hold principles like these, which reason dictates,
“ Which all our notions of the Powers divine
“ Declare the social laws they meant for man,
“ And all the beauties and delights of nature
“ Bear witness to,” the Christians may be right ;
Thy sect cannot, who, nurs'd in blood and slaughter,
Worship a cruel and revengeful being,
And draw him always with his thunder round him
As ripe for the destruction of mankind.

Mir. If clemency delights thee learn it here.
Though banish'd by thy voice his native city,
Though by thy hand robb'd of his only son,
Mahomet pardons thee ; nay farther, begs
The hatred burning 'twixt you be extinguish'd
With reconciliation's gen'rous tear.

Alca. I know thy master's arts ; his gen'rous tears,
Like the refreshing drops that previous fall
To the wild outrage of o'erwhelming earthquakes
Only forerun destruction ;
Courage he has, not bravery,
For blood and havoc are the sure attendants
On his victorious car.

Pba. Leagues he will make too——

Alca. Like other grasping tyrants, till he eyes
A lucky juncture to enlarge his bounds,
Then he 'll deride 'em, leap o'er ev'ry tie
Of sacred guarantee or sworn protection,
And when th' oppress'd ally implores assistance

Beneath that mask invade the wish'd-for realms,
And from pure friendship take them to himself.

Mir. Mahomet fights Heaven's battles, bends the bow
To spread Heaven's laws, and to subject to faith
The iron neck of error.

Alca. Lust and ambition, Mirvan, are the springs
Of all his actions, whilst without one virtue
Dissimulation, like a flatt'ring painter,
Bedecks him with the colouring of them all :
This is thy master's portrait——But no more——
My soul's inexorable, and my hate
Immortal as the cause from whence it sprang.

Mir. What cause?——

Alca. The difference between good and evil.

Mir. Thou talk'st to me, Alcanor, with an air
Of a stern judge, that from his dread tribunal
Intimidates the criminal beneath him:
Resume thy temper, act the minister,
And treat with me as with th' ambassador
Of Heaven's apostle, and Arabia's king.

Alca. Arabia's king! what king! who crown'd him?

Mir. Conquest——

Whilst to the stile of conqueror and of monarch
Patron of peace he'd add—Name then the price
Of peace and of Palmira—Boundless treasures,
The spoils of vanquish'd monarchs, and the stores
Of rifled provinces are thrown before thee.
Our troops, with matchless ardour hasten hither
To lay in ruin this rebellious city;
Stem then the rushing torrent: Mahomet
In person comes to claim a conference with thee
For this good purpose.

Alca. Who! Mahomet!

Mir. Yes, he conjures thou'lt grant it.

Alca. Traitor! were I sole ruler here in Mecca
I'd answer thee with chastisement.

Mir. Hot man!

I pity thy false virtue—But farewell——

And since the senate share thy power in Mecca

To their serener wisdoms I'll appeal.

[*Exit.*

Alca. I'll meet thee there, and see whose voice is victor.

Come, Pharon, aid me to repulse this traitor;

To bear him with impunity amongst us

Is treason 'gainst ourselves——Ye sacred powers,

My country's gods, that for three thousand years

Have reign'd protectors of the tribe of Ishmael,

Oh! support my spirit

In that firm purpose it has always held,

To combat violence, fraud, and usurpation,

To pluck the spoil from the oppressor's jaws,

And keep my country, as I found it, free.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

Palmira's Apartment. Enter PALMIRA.

Palmira.

CEASE, cease ye streaming instruments of woe

From your ignoble toil—Take warmth, my heart!

Collect thy scatter'd powers, and brave misfortune.

In vain the storm-tost mariner repines;

Were he within to raise as great a tempest

As beats him from without, it would not smooth

One boist'rous surge: impatience only throws

Discredit on mischance, and adds a shame
To our affliction.

Enter ZAPHNA.

Ha! all-gracious Heaven!

Thou, Zaphna! is it thou? what pitying angel
Guided thy steps to these abodes of bondage?

Zaph. Thou sov'reign of my soul and all its powers,
Object of ev'ry fear and ev'ry wish,
Friend, sister, love, companion, all that's dear!
Do I once more behold thee, my Palmira?
Oh! I will set it down the whitest hour
That Zaphna e'er was blest with!

Pal. Say, my hero——
Are my ills ended then?—They are, they are;
Now Zaphna's here I am no more a captive
Except to him:—oh, blest captivity!

Zaph. Those smiles are dearer to my raptur'd breast,
Sweeter those accents to my listening heart,
Than all Arabia's spices to the sense.

Pal. No wonder that my soul was so elate,
No wonder that the cloud of grief gave way,
When thou, my son of comfort, were so nigh.

Zaph. Since that dire hour, when on Sabaria's strand
The barb'rous foe depriv'd me of Palmira,
In what a gulph of horror and despair
Have thy imagined perils plunged my soul!
Stretch'd on expiring corse for a while,
To the deaf stream I pour'd out my complaint,
And begg'd I might be number'd with the dead
That strew'd its banks—then, starting from despair,
With rage I flew to Mahomet for vengeance;
He, for some high mysterious purpose known

To Heaven and him alone, at length dispatch'd
 The valiant Mirvan to demand a truce :
 Instant on wings of lightning I pursued him,
 And enter'd as his hostage——fix'd, Palmira,
 Or to redeem or die a captive with thee.

Pal. Heroic youth !

Zaph. But how have these barbarians
 Treated my fair ?

Pal. With high humanity.
 I in my victor found a friend——Alcanor
 Has made me feel captivity in nothing
 But absence from my Zaphna and my friends.

Zaph. I grieve a soul so generous in our foe :
 But now presented as a hostage to him,
 His noble bearing and humanity
 Made captive of my heart ; I felt, methought,
 A new affection lighted in my breast,
 And wonder'd whence the infant ardour sprang.

Pal. Yet, gen'rous as he is, not all my prayers,
 Not all the tears I lavish at his feet,
 Can move him to restore me——

Zaph. But he shall——
 Let the Barbarian know he shall, Palmira ;
 The god of Mahomet; our divine protector,
 Whose still triumphant standard I have borne
 O'er piles of vanquish'd infidels—that power
 Which brought unnumber'd battlements to earth,
 Will humble Mecca too.

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, noble Mirvan,
 Do my Palmira's chains sit loose upon her ;
 Say, is it freedom ? This presumptuous senate——

Mir. Has granted all we ask'd, all we could wish—
The truce obtain'd, the gates to Mahomet
Flew open——

Zaph. Mahomet in Mecca say'st thou?
Once more in Mecca!

Pal. Transport! bid him welcome.

Zaph. Thy suff'rings then are o'er, the ebb is past,
And a full tide of hope flows in upon us.

Mir. The spirit of our prophet that inspired me
Breath'd such divine persuasion from my lips
As shook the reverend fathers—Sirs, cry'd I,
This fav'rite of high Heaven, who rules in battle,
Before whose footstool tributary kings
Bow the anointed head, born here in Mecca,
Asks but to be enroll'd a senator,
And you refuse his prayer. Deluded sages!
Although your conq'ror he requests no more,
Than one day's truce, pure pity to yourselves!
To save you if he can, and you—Oh, shame!——
At this a gen'ral murmur spread around,
Which seem'd propitious to us——

Zaph. Greatly carry'd!
Go on——

Mir. Then straight th' inflexible Alcanor
Flew through the streets, assembling all the people
To bar our prophet. Thither too I fled,
Urg'd the same arguments, exhorted, threaten'd,
Till they unhing'd the gates, and gave free passage
To Mahomet and his chiefs—In vain Alcanor
And his dishearten'd party, strove t' oppose him;
Serene and dauntless through the gazing crowd,
With more than human majesty he mov'd,
Bearing the peaceful olive, whilst the truce
Was instantly proclaim'd——

Pal. But where's the prophet ?

Mir. Reclin'd in yonder grot that joins the temple,
Attended by his chiefs.

Zaph. There let us haste
With duteous step, and bow ourselves before him. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

*Changes to a spacious Grotto. MAHOMET discovered with the
Alcoran before him.*

Mah. Glorious hypocrisy ! what fools are they
Who fraught with lustful or ambitious views
Wear not thy specious mask. Thou, Alcoran !
Hast won more battles, ta'en more cities for me,
Than thrice my feeble numbers had achieved
Without the succour of thy sacred impulse.

Enter HERCIDES, AMMON, and ALI.

Invincible supporters of our grandeur !
My faithful chiefs, Hercides, Ammon, Ali !
Go and instruct this people in my name,
That faith may dawn, and like a morning-star
Be herald to my rising :
Lead them to know and to adore my god ;
But above all, to fear him—Lo, Palmira ! [*Ex. Her. &c.*]
Her angel-face, with unfeign'd blushes spread,
Proclaims the purity that dwells within.

Enter MIRVAN, ZAPHNA, and PALMIRA.

[*To Palmira.*] The hand of war was ne'er before so barbarous,

Never bore from me half so rich a spoil
As thee, my fair.

Pal. Joy to my heavenly guardian!
Joy to the world that Mahomet's in Mecca!

Mab. My child, let me embrace thee—How's this,
Zaphna!

Thou here!

Zaph. [*Kneeling.*] My father, chief, and holy pontiff!
The god that thou'rt inspir'd by march'd before me.
Ready for thee to wade through seas of danger,
Or cope with death itself, I hither hasten'd
To yield myself an hostage, and with zeal
Prevent thy order.

Mab. 'T was not well, rash boy:
He that does more than I command him, errs
As much as he who falters in his duty,
And is not for my purpose—I obey
My god—implicitly obey thou me.

Pal. Pardon, my gracious lord, his well-meant ardour.
Brought up from tender infancy beneath
The shelter of thy sacred patronage,
Zaphna and I've been animated still
By the same sentiments: alas, great prophet!
I've had enough of wretchedness—to languish
A prisoner here, far both from him and you;
Grudge me not then the ray of consolation
His presence beam'd, nor cloud my dawning hope
Of rising freedom and felicity.

Mab. Palmira, 't is enough; I read thy heart—
Be not alarm'd; though burden'd with the cares
Of thrones and altars, still my guardian eye
Will watch o'er thee as o'er the universe.
Follow my generals, Zaphna. Fair Palmira,

Retire and pay your powerful vows to Heaven,
And dread no wrongs but from Alcanor.

[Zaphna and Palmira go out separately.]

Mirvan——

Attend thou here—'T is time, my trusty soldier,
My long-try'd friend, to lay unfolded to thee
The close resolves and councils of my heart.
The tedious length of a precarious siege
May damp the present ardour of my troops,
And check me in the height of my career.
Let us not give deluded mortals leisure
By reason to disperse the mystic gloom
We've cast about us—Prepossession, friend,
Reigns monarch of the million—Mecca's crowd
Gaze at my rapid victories, and think
Some awful power directs my arm to conquest ;
But whilst our friends once more renew their efforts
To win the wav'ring people to our interest,
What think'st thou, say, of Zaphna and Palmira ?

Mir. As of thy most resign'd and faithful vassals.

Mab. Oh, Mirvan ! they're the deadliest of my foes.

Mir. How !

Mab. Yes, they love each other——

Mir. Well—what crime ?——

Mab. What crime ! dost say ?—Learn all my frailty then—
My life's a combat : keen austerity
Subjects my nature to abstemious bearings ;
I've banish'd from my lips that trait'rous liquor,
That either works to practices of outrage
Or melts the manly breast to woman's weakness ;
Or on the burning sands or desert rocks
With thee I bear th' inclemency of climates,
Freeze at the pole, or scorch beneath the line.

For all these toils love only can retaliate,
The only consolation or reward.
Fruit of my labours, idol of my incense,
And sole divinity that I adore ;
Know then that I prefer this young Palmira
To all the ripen'd beauties that attend me,
Dwell on her accents, dote upon her smiles,
And am not mine but her's. Now judge, my friend,
How vast the jealous transports of thy master,
When at his feet he daily hears this charmer
Avow a foreign love, and, insolent,
Give Mahomet a rival!

Mir. How! and Mahomet
Not instantly revenge——

Mab. Ah! should he not?
But better to detest him know him better :
Learn then, that both my rival and my love
Sprang from the loins of this audacious tyrant.

Mir. Alcanor !

Mab. Is their father : old Hercides,
To whose sage institution I commit
My captive infants, late reveal'd it to me——
Perdition ! I myself light up their flame,
And fed it till I set myself on fire.
Well, means must be employed : but see, the father ;
He comes this way, and launches from his eye
Malignant sparks of enmity and rage.
Mirvan, see all ta'en care of ; let Hercides
With his escort beset yon gate ; bid Ali
Make proper disposition round the temple ;
This done, return and render me account
Of what success we meet with 'mongst the people :
Then, Mirvan, we'll determine or to loose
Or bridle in our vengeance as it suits.

[*Exit Mir.*

Enter ALCANOR.

Mab. Why dost thou start, Alcanor? whence that horror!
Is then my sight so baneful to thee?

Alca. "Heavens!"

Must I then bear this? must I meet in Mecca,
On terms of peace, this spoiler of the earth?

Mab. Approach, old man, without a blush, since Heaven
For some high end decrees our future union.

Alca. I blush not for myself, but thee, thou tyrant;
For thee, bad man! who com'st with serpent guile
To sow dissention in the realms of peace:
Thy very name sets families at variance,
'Twixt son and father bursts the bonds of nature,
And scars endearment from the nuptial pillow;
"Ev'n truce with thee is a new stratagem."
And is it, insolent dissembler! thus
Thou com'st to give the sons of Mecca peace,
And me an unknown god?

Mab. Were I to answer any but Alcanor,
That unknown god should speak in thunder for me,
But here with thee I'd parley as a man.

Alca. What canst thou say, what urge in thy defence?
What right hast thou received to plant new faiths,
Or lay a claim to royalty and priesthood?

Mab. The right that a resolv'd and tow'ring spirit
Has o'er the grov'ling instinct of the vulgar——

Alca. Patience, good Heavens! have I not known thee,
Mahomet,
When void of wealth, inheritance, or fame,
Rank'd with the lowest of the low at Mecca?

Mab. Dost thou not know, thou haughty feeble man,
That the low insect, lurking in the grass,

And the imperial eagle, which aloft
Ploughs the ethereal plain, are both alike
In the Eternal Eye—Mortals are equal :
It is not birth, magnificence, or power,
But virtue only makes the difference 'twixt them.

Alca. [*Apart.*] What sacred truth from what polluted lips !

Mab. By virtue's ardent pinions borne on high
Heaven met my zeal, gave me in solemn charge
Its sacred laws, then bade me on and publish.

Alca. And did Heaven bid thee on and plunder too ?

Mab. My law is active, and inflames the soul
With thirst of glory. What can thy dumb gods ?
What laurels spring beneath their sooty altars ?
Thy slothful sect disgrace the human kind,
Enervate lifeless images of men !

Mine bear the intrepid soul ; my faith makes heroes.

Alca. Go preach these doctrines at Medina, where
By prostrate wretches thou art rais'd to homage.

Mab. Hear me ; thy Mecca trembles at my name ;
If therefore thou wouldst save thyself or city,
Embrace my proffer'd friendship—What to-day
I thus solicit I'll command to-morrow.

Alca. Contract with thee a friendship ! frontless man !
Know'st thou a god can work that miracle ?

Mab. I do—Necessity—thy interest.

Alca. Interest is thy god, Equity is mine.
Propose the tie of this unnatural union ;
Say, is't the loss of thy ill-fated son,
Who in the field fell victim to my rage,
Or the dear blood of my poor captive children,
Shed by thy butchering hands ?

Mab. Ay, 'tis thy children.

Mark me then well, and learn th' important secret
Which I'm sole master of—Thy children live.

Alca. Live!

Mab. Yes——both live——

Alca. What say'st thou? Both!

Mab. Ay, both.

Alca. And dost thou not beguile me?

Mab. No, old man.

Alca. Propitious Heav'ns! Say, Mahomet, for now
Methinks I could hold endless converse with thee,
Say what's their portion, liberty or bondage?

Mab. Bred in my camp, and tutor'd in my law,
I hold the balance of their destinies,
And now 'tis on the turn——their lives or deaths——
'Tis thine to say which shall preponderate.

Alca. Mine! can I save them? name the mighty ransom—
If I must bear their chains double the weight,
And I will kiss the hand that puts them on;
Or if my streaming blood must be the purchase,
Drain ev'ry sluice and channel of my body,
My swelling veins will burst to give it passage.

Mab. I'll tell thee then—renounce thy Pagan faith,
Abolish thy vain gods, and——

Alca. Ha!

Mab. Nay, more,
Surrender Mecca to me, quit this temple,
Assist me to impose upon the world,
Thunder my Koran to the gazing crowd,
Proclaim me for their prophet and their king,
And be a glorious pattern of credulity
To Korah's stubborn tribe. These terms perform'd
Thy son shall be restor'd, and Mahomet's self
Will deign to wed thy daughter.

Alca. Hear me, Mahomet——
I am a father, and this bosom boasts

A heart as tender as e'er parent bore.
After a fifteen years of anguish for them,
Once more to view my children, clasp them to me,
And die in their embraces—melting thought!
But were I doom'd or to enslave my country,
And help to spread black error o'er the earth,
Or to behold these blood-embrued hands,
Deprive me of them both—Know me then, Mahomet,
I'd not admit a doubt to cloud my choice——
[*Looking earnestly at Mahomet for some time before he speaks.*]
Farewell. [Exit Alcanor.]

Mab. Why, fare thee well then, churlish dotard!
Inexorable fool! Now by my arms
I will have great revenge: I'll meet thy scorn
With treble retribution.

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, my Mirvan,
What say'st thou to it now?

Mer. Why, that Alcanor
Or we must fall.

Mab. Fall then the obdurate rebel!

Mer. The truce expires to-morrow, when Alcanor
Again is Mecca's master, and has vow'd
Destruction on thy head: the senate too
Have pass'd thy doom.

Mab. Those heart-chill'd paltry babblers,
Plac'd on the bench of sloth, with ease can nod
And vote a man to death; why don't the cowards
Stand me in yonder plain? With half their numbers
I drove them headlong to their walls for shelter,
And he was deem'd the wisest senator
That enter'd first the gate; but now they think

They've got me in the toil their spirits mount,
And they could prove most valorous assassins——
Well, this I like—I always ow'd my greatness
To opposition ; had I not met with struggles,
I'd been obscure—Enough—Perish Alcanor !
He marbled up the pliant populace,
Those dupes of novelty will bend before us
Like osiers to a hurricane——

Mir. No time
Is to be lost.

Mab. But for a proper arm ;
For, however irksome, we must save
Appearances, and mask it with the vulgar.

Mir. True, my sage chief—What think'st thou then of
Zaphna ?

Mab. Of Zaphna, say'st thou !

Mir. Yes, Alcanor's hostage——
He can in private do thee vengeance on him :
Thy other fav'rites of maturer age,
And more discreetly zealous, would not risk it :
Youth is the stock whence grafted superstition
Shoots with unbounded vigour. He's a slave
To thy despotic faith, and urg'd by thee,
However mild his nature may appear,
Howe'er humane and noble is his spirit,
Or strong his reason, where allow'd to reason,
He would for Heaven's sake martyr half mankind.

Mab. The brother of Palmira !

Mir. Yes, that brother,
The only son of thy outrageous foe,
And the incestuous rival of thy love.

Mab. I hate the stripling, loathe his very name ;
The manes of my son too cries for vengeance
On the curs'd sire ; but then thou know'st my love,

Know'st from whose blood she sprang; this staggers, Mirvan,
 And yet I'm here surrounded with a gulf
 Ready to swallow me; come too in quest
 Of altars and a throne—What must be done?
 My warring passions, like contending clouds
 When fraught with thunder's fatal fuel, burst
 Upon themselves, and rend me with the shock.
 And shall enervating contagious love
 Hag my aspiring spirit, sink me down
 To woman's shackles, make a lapthing of me?
 Glory! that must not be! ambition still
 And great revenge impetuous urge their claims,
 And must be notic'd. Mirvan, sound this youth:
 Touch not at once upon the startling purpose,
 But make due preparation.

Mir. I'll attack him.

With all the forces of enthusiasm;
 There lies our strength.

Mab. First then, a solemn vow
 To act whatever Heaven by me enjoins him;
 Next omens, dreams, and visions, may be pleaded;
 Hints too of black designs by this Alcanor
 Upon Palmira's virtue and his life——
 But to the proof—Be now propitious, Fortune,
 Then love, ambition, vengeance, jointly triumph. [Ext.]

ACT III. SCENE I.

A Grand Apartment. Enter ZAPHNA and PALMIRA.

Zaphna.

ALCANOR claim a private conference with us!
 What has he to unfold?

Pal. I tremble, Zaphna.

Zaph. Time press'd too, did he say?

Pal. He did; then cast

A look so piercing on me it o'erwhelm'd
My face with deep confusion; this he mark'd,
Then starting left me.

Zaph. [*Aside.*] Ha! this gives me fear
That Mirvan's jealousies are too well grounded;
But I must not distract her tender bosom
With visionary terrors. [*To Pal.*] Both in private!

Pal. In private both.

Zaph. Her virtue and my life! [*Apart.*]
It cannot be; so reverend a form
Could ne'er be pander to such black devices.

Pal. But let us shun it, Zaphna; much I fear
Alcanor has deceiv'd us: dread the treachery
Of this blood-thirsty senate. Trust me, Zaphna,
They've sworn the extirpation of our faith,
Nor care by what vile means——

Zaph. My soul's best treasure,
For whose security my ev'ry thought
Is up in arms, regardless of my own;
Shun thou Alcanor's presence! This hour, Palmira,
Mirvan, by order of our royal pontiff,
Prepares to solemnize some act of worship
Of a more hallow'd and mysterious kind
Than will admit of vulgar eye; myself
Alone am honour'd to assist.

Pal. Alone!

Zaph. Yes, to devote myself by solemn vow
For some great act, of which my fair's the prize.

Pal. What act?

Zaph. No matter, since my lov'd Palmira
Shall be the glorious recompense——

Pal. Oh, Zaphna !

Methinks I do not like this secret vow.

Why must I not be present ! were I with thee,
I should not be so anxious ;

For trust me, Zaphna, my affection for thee
Is of that pure disinterested nature,
So free from passion's taint, I've no one wish
To have thee more than thus, have thee my friend,
Share thy lov'd converse, wait upon thy welfare,
And view thee with a sister's spotless eye.

Zaph. Angelic excellence !

Pal. And let me tell thee

This Mirvan, this fierce Mirvan gives me terrors :
So far from tend'ring consolation to me,
His theme is blood and slaughter. As I met him
His eyes flam'd fury, whilst in dubious phrase
He thus bespoke me—The destroying angel
Must be let loose—Palmira, Heaven ordains
Some glorious deed for thee, yet hid in darkness ;
Learn an implicit rev'rence for its will ;
And above all I warn thee fear for Zaphna.

Zaph. What could he mean ? can I believe, Alcanor,
Thy fair deportment but a treacherous mask ?
Yet spite of all the rage that ought to fire me
Against this rebel to our faith and prophet
I've held me happy in his friendship,
And bondage wore the livery of choice.

Pal. How has Heaven fraught our love-link'd hearts, my
Zaphna,
With the same thoughts, aversions, and desires !
But for thy safety and our dread religion,

That thunders hatred to all infidels,
With great remorse I should accuse Alcanor.

Zaph. Let us shake off this vain remorse, Palmira,
Resign ourselves to Heaven and act its pleasure.

The hour is come that I must pledge my vow :
Doubt not but the Supreme, who claims this service,
Will prove propitious to our chaste endearments.

Farewell, my love! I fly to gain the summit
Of earth's felicity—to gain Palmira.

[*Exit.*

Pal. Where'er I turn me here 't is all suspicion.
What means this vow? Mirvan, I like thee not :
Alcanor too distracts my tim'rous breast :
Ev'n Mahomet's self I dread, whilst I invoke him.
Like one benighted 'midst a place of tombs
I gaze around me, start at ev'ry motion,
And seem hemm'd in by visionary spectres.
All-righteous Power, whom, trembling, I adore,
And blindly follow, oh, deliver me
From these heart-rending terrors!—Ha! who's here?

Enter MAHOMET.

'T is he! 't is Mahomet himself! kind Heaven
Has sent him to my aid—My gracious lord!
Protect the dear, dear idol of my soul;
Save Zaphna; guard him from——

Mab. From what!—why Zaphna?
Whence this vain terror? is he not with us?

Pal. Oh, sir, you double now my apprehensions!
Those broken accents and that eager look
Shew you have anguish smoth'ring at the heart,
And prove for once that Mahomet's a mortal.

Mab. [*Apart.*] Ha! I shall turn a traitor to myself—
O, woman! woman! hear me; ought I not

To be enrag'd at thy prophane attachment?
How could thy breast, without the keenest sting,
Harbour one thought not dictated by me?
Is that young mind I took such toil to form
Turn'd an ingrate and infidel at once?
Away, rebellious maid——

Pal. What dost thou say,
My royal lord? Thus prostrate at your feet
Let me implore forgiveness, if in aught
I have offended: talk not to me thus;
A frown from thee, my father, and my king,
Is death to poor Palmira. Say then, Mahomet,
Didst thou not in this very place permit him
To tender me his vows?

Mab. [*Apart.*] “His vows! perdition!”
How the soft trait'ress racks me!—Rise, Palmira——
[*Apart.*] Down, rebel love! I must be calm—Come hither;
Beware, rash maid, of such imprudent steps,
They lead to guilt. What wild pernicious errors
Mayn't the heart yield to if not greatly watch'd!

Pal. In loving Zaphna sure it cannot err;
There's nothing wild, nothing pernicious——

Mab. How!
This theme delights you——

Pal. I must own it does.
Yes, my great master, for I still have thought
That Heaven itself approv'd of my affection,
And gave a sanction to our mutual ardors.
Can what was virtue once be now a crime?
Can I be guilty——

Mab. Yes—towards me you are——
You, nurs'd from infancy beneath my eye,
Child of my care, and pupil of my faith,

You, whom my partial fondness still distinguish'd
 From all the captive youths that grac'd my triumphs,
 And you, who now without my leave permit
 A slave to bear thee from my sight for ever.

Pal. No, we both live, nay more, would die for thee:
 And oh, my lord! if all that earth can offer
 Of grandeur, opulence, or pleasure, e'er
 Shall make me deaf to gratitude's demands,
 May Zaphna's self be evidence against me,
 And plead for double vengeance on my treachery.

Mab. [*Apart.*] Zaphna again! Furies! I shall relapse!
 And make her witness of my weakness.

Pal. Sir!
 What sudden start of passion arms that eye?

Mab. Oh, nothing: pray retire a while: take courage;
 I'm not at all displeas'd: 't was but to sound
 The depth of thy young heart. I praise thy choice;
 Trust then thy dearest interest to my bosom:
 But know your fate depends on your obedience.
 If I have been a guardian to your youth,
 If all my lavish bounties past weigh aught,
 Deserve the future blessings which await you.
 Howe'er the voice of Heaven dispose of Zaphna,
 Confirm him in the path, where duty leads,
 That he may keep his vow, and merit thee.

Pal. Distrust him not, my sov'reign; noble Zaphna
 Disdains to lag in love or glory's cause.

Mab. Enough of words——

Pal. As boldly I've avow'd
 The love I bear that hero at your feet,
 I'll now to him, and fire his gen'rous breast
 To prove the duty he has sworn to thee. [*Exit Pal.*]

Mab. [*Alone.*] Confusion: must I, spite o' me, be made

The confidant of her incestuous passion?
 What could I say? such sweet simplicity
 Lur'd down my rage, and innocently wing'd
 The arrow through my heart. And shall I bear this?
 Be made the sport of curs'd Alcanor's house?
 Check'd in my rapid progress by the sire,
 Supplanted in my love by this rash boy,
 And made a gentle pander to the daughter?
 Perdition on the whole detested race!

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Now, Mahomet, is the time to seize on Mecca,
 Crush this Alcanor, and enjoy Palmira.
 This night the old enthusiast offers incense
 To his vain gods in sacred Caabo:
 Zaphna, who flames with zeal for heaven and thee,
 May be won o'er to seize that lucky moment.

Mab. He shall; It must be so; he's born to act
 The glorious crime; and let him be at once
 The instrument and victim of the murder.
 My law, my love, my vengeance, my own safety,
 Have doom'd it so—But, Mirvan, dost thou think
 His youthful courage, nurs'd in superstition,
 Can e'er be work'd——

Mir. I tell thee, Mahomet,
 He's tutor'd to accomplish thy design.
 Palmira too, who thinks thy will is Heaven's,
 Will nerve his arm to execute thy pleasure.
 Love and enthusiasm blind her youth:
 They're still most zealous who're most ignorant.

Mab. Didst thou engage him by a solemn vow?

Mir. I did, with all th'enthusiastic pomp
 Thy law enjoins; then gave him, as from thee,

A consecrated sword to act thy will.

Oh, he is burning with religious fury !

Mab. But hold, he comes——

Enter ZAPHNA.

Child of that awful and tremendous power
Whose laws I publish, whose behests proclaim,

Listen whilst I unfold his sacred will :

'T is thine to vindicate his ways to man,

'T is thine his injur'd worship to avenge.

Zaph. Thou lord of nations, delegate of Heaven,

Sent to shed day o'er the benighted world,

Oh, say in what can Zaphna prove his duty !

Instruct me how a frail earth-prison'd mortal

Can or avenge or vindicate a god.

Mab. By thy weak arm he deigns to prove his cause,

And launch his vengeance on blaspheming rebels.

Zaph. What glorious action, what illustrious danger

Does that Supreme, whose image thou, demand ?

Place me, oh, place me ! in the front of battle

'Gainst odds innumerable ; try me there ;

Or, if a single combat claim my might,

The stoutest Arab may step forth and see

If Zaphna fail to greet him as he ought.

Mab. Oh, greatly said, my son ; 't is inspiration !

but heed me : 't is not by a glaring act

Of human valour Heaven has will'd to prove thee ;

This infidels themselves may boast, when led

By ostentation, rage, or brute-like rashness.

To do whate'er Heaven gives in sacred charge,

Nor dare to sound its fathomless decrees,

'This, and this only 's meritorious zeal.

Attend, adore, obey ; thou shalt be arm'd
By death's remorseless angel which awaits me.

Zaph. Speak out, pronounce ; what victim must I offer !
What tyrant sacrifice ? whose blood requir'st thou ?

Mab. The blood of a detested infidel,
A murderer, a foe to Heaven and me,
A wretch who slew my child, blasphemes my god,
And, like a huge Colossus, bears a world
Of impious opposition to my faith :
The blood of curst Alcanor.

Zaph. I !—Alcanor !

Mab. What ! dost thou hesitate ! Rash youth, beware ;
He that deliberates is sacrilegious.
Far, far from me be those audacious mortals,
Who for themselves would impiously judge,
Or see with their own eyes ; who dares to think
Was never born a proselyte for me.
Know who I am ; know on this very spot
I've charg'd thee with the just decree of Heaven,
And when that Heaven requires of thee no more
Than the bare off'ring of its deadliest foe,
Nay, thy foe too, and mine, why dost thou balance,
As thy own father were the victim claim'd !
Go, vile idolater ! false Mussulman !
Go seek another master, a new faith.

Zaph. Oh, Mahomet !

Mab. Just when the prize is ready,
When fair Palmira's destin'd to thy arms——
But what's Palmira ? or what's Heaven to thee,
Thou poor weak rebel to thy faith and love !
Go serve and cringe to our detested foe.

Zaph. Oh, pardon, Mahomet ! methinks I hear
The oracle of Heaven—It shall be done.

Mab. Obey then, strike, and for his impious blood,
 Palmira's charms and Paradise be thine.

["*Apart to Mirvan.*] Mirvan, attend him close, and let thy
 eyes

"Be fix'd on ev'ry movement of his soul." [Exeunt.

Zaph. [*Alone.*] Soft, let me think—This duty wears the
 face

Of something more than monstrous—Pardon, Heaven!

To sacrifice an innocent old man,

Weigh'd down with age, unsuccour'd and unarm'd!

When I am hostage for his safety too!—

No matter, Heaven has chose me for the duty;

My vow is past and must be straight fulfilled.

Ye stern relentless ministers of wrath,

Spirits of vengeance! by whose ruthless hands

The haughty tyrants of the earth have bled,

Come to my succour, to my flaming zeal

Join your determin'd courage;

And thou, angel

Of Mahomet, exterminating angel!

That mow'st down nations to prepare his passage,

Support my falt'ring will, harden my heart,

Lest nature, pity, plead Alcanor's cause,

And wrest the dagger from me.

Hah! who comes here?

Enter ALCANOR.

Alca. Whence, Zaphna, that deep gloom,

That, like a blasting mildew on the ear

Of promis'd harvest, blackens o'er thy visage?

Grieve not that here, through form, thou art confin'd;

I hold thee not as hostage but as friend,

And make thy safety partner with my own.

Zaph. [*Apart.*] And make my safety partner with thy own !

Alca. The bloody carnage, by this truce suspended
For a few moments, like a torrent check'd
In its full flow, will, with redoubled strength,
Bear all before it——
In this impending scene of public horror
Be then, dear youth ! these mansions thy asylum :
I'll be thy hostage now, and with my life
Will answer that no mischief shall befall thee.
I know not why, but thou art precious to me.

Zaph. Heaven, duty, gratitude, humanity ! [*Apart.*
What didst thou say, Alcanor ? Didst thou say
That thy own roof should shield me from the tempest ?
That thy own life stood hostage for my safety ?

Alca. Why thus amaz'd at my compassion for thee ?
I am a man myself, and that's enough
To make me feel the woes of other men,
And labour to redress 'em——

Zaph. [*Apart.*] What melody these accents make !
And, whilst my own religion spurs to murder,
His precepts of humanity prevail.
[*To Alcanor.*] Can then a foe to Mahomet's sacred law
Be virtue's friend ?

Alca. Thou know'st but little, Zaphna,
If thou dost think true virtue is confin'd
To climes or systems ; no, it flows spontaneous,
Like life's warm stream throughout the whole creation,
And beats the pulse of ev'ry healthful heart.
How canst thou, Zaphna, worship for thy god,
A being, claiming cruelty and murders
From his adorers ? Such is thy master's god——

Zaph. [*Apart.*] Oh, my relenting soul ! thou'rt almost
thaw'd

From thy resolve—I pray you, sir, no more.
Peace, reason, peace!

Alca. [*Apart.*] The more I view him, talk with him, observe
His understanding tow'ring 'bove his age,
His candour, which ev'n bigotry can't smother,
The more my breast takes int'rest in his welfare.
Zaphna, come near—I oft have thought to ask thee
To whom thou ow'st thy birth; whose gen'rous blood
Swells thy young veins and mantles at thy heart.

Zaph. That dwells in darkness; no one friendly beam
E'er gave me glimpse from whom I am descended.
The camp of godlike Mahomet has been
My cradle and my country, whilst of all
His captive infants no one more has shar'd
The sunshine of his clemency and care.

Alca. I do not blame thy gratitude, young man;
But why was Mahomet thy benefactor?
Why was not I? I envy him that glory.
Why then this impious man has been a father
Alike to thee and to the fair Palmira?

Zaph. Oh!

Alca. What's the cause, my *Zaphna*, of that sigh,
And all that language of a smother'd anguish?
Why didst thou snatch away thy cordial eye
That shone on me before?

Zaph. [*Apart.*] Oh, my torn heart!
Palmira's name revives the racking thought
Of my near blunted purpose.

Alca. Come, my friend;
The flood-gates of destruction soon thrown ope
Will pour in ruin on that curse of nations.
If I can save but thee and fair Palmira
From this o'erflowing tide, let all the rest

Of his abandon'd minions be the victims
For your deliverance—I must save your blood.

Zaph. [*Apart.*] Just Heaven! and is't not I must shed
his blood?

Alca. Nay, tremble if thou dar'st to hesitate.
Follow me straight.

Enter PHARON.

Pha. Alcanor, read that letter,
Put in my hands this moment by an Arab
With utmost stealth, and air, bespeaking somewhat
Of high importance.

Alc. [*Reads.*] Whence is this?—Hercides!—
Cautious, my eyes! be sure you're not mistaken
In what you here insinuate. Gracious Heaven!
Will then thy providence at length o'er-rule
My wayward fate, and by one matchless blessing
Sweeten the sufferings of a threescore years!

[*After looking some time earnestly at Zaphna.*

Follow me.

Zaph. Thee!—But Mahomet—

Alca. Thy life
And all its future bliss dwells on this moment.
Follow, I say.

[*Exeunt Alcanor and Pharon.*

*Enter MIRVAN and his Attendants hastily on the other side of
the Stage.*

Mir. [*To Zaph.*] Traitor, turn back; what means
This conference with the foe? To Mahomet
Away this instant; he commands thy presence.

Zaph. [*Apart.*] Where am I?—Heavens! how shall I
now resolve!

How act! a precipice on ev'ry side

"Awaits me," and the first, least step's perdition.

Mir. Young man, our prophet brooks not such delay;

Go stop the bolt that's ready to be launch'd

On thy rebellious head.

Zaph. Yes, and renounce

This horrid vow that's poison to my soul.

[*Exit with Mirvan, &c.*

Re-enter ALCANOR and PHARON.

Alca. Where is this Zaphna?—But he flies me still:

In vain I call in all the softening arts

Of pity, love, and friendship, to engage him:

His breast is sear'd by that impostor's precepts

'Gainst all who bid defiance to his laws.

But, Pharon, didst thou mark the baneful gloom,

That somewhat like reluctance, rage, and pity,

That blended sat upon his pensive brow?

Pha. I did; there's something at his heart——

Alca. There is——

Would I could fathom it!—This letter, Pharon,

His aspect, age, the transport that I taste

When he is near me, the anxiety

His absence gives, do too much violence

To my distracted sense. Hercides here

Desires to see me; 't was his barbarous hands

That robb'd me of my children; they are living,

He tells me, under Mahomet's protection,

And he has something to unfold, on which

Their destiny and mine depends. This Zaphna,

And young Palmira, vassals of that tyrant,

Are ignorant from whom they are descended.

Imagination's pregnant with the thought.

My wishes mock me. Sinking with my grief
I blindly catch at ev'ry flattering error,
And supplicate deception's self for succour.

Pba. Hope, but yet fear, Alcanor : think, my chief,
How many infants from their parents torn,
Ere conscious whose they are, attend that tyrant,
Drink in his dictates, place their being in him,
And deem him an infallible dispenser
Of Heaven's decisions——

Alca. Well, no matter, Pharon :
At noon of night conduct Hercides hither ;
Thy master in th' adjoining fane once more
Will importune the gods with prayers and incense,
That he may save his friends and see his children.

Pba. Thou shalt not find thy Pharon slack in aught
That tends to thy deliverance from this anguish. [Exit.

Alca. Just Heaven ! if by erroneous thought or act
I have drawn down your fierce displeasure on me,
Point me to right, I'll onward to its goal
With double energy, will expiate all,
That in the days of ignorance might offend ;
Only restore my children to my care,
Give to my craving arms my hapless children,
That I may form them, turn 'em back from wrong,
Weed their young minds of those pernicious errors
The arch impostor has implanted in 'em,
Train 'em in virtue's school, and lead them on
To deeds of glorious and immortal honour. [Exit.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Mahomet's Apartment. MAHOMET alone.

Mahomet.

AMBITION knows not conscience——
Well, this Zaphna
Is fix'd at length——I lesson'd him so home,
Dealt to his young enthusiastic soul
Such promises and threats——

Enter MIRVAN.

Mirvan, what news?

Mir. Oh, Mahomet, I fear the nice-woven web
Of our design's unravell'd. Ere thy spirit
Had re-inflam'd young Zaphna with the thirst
Of old Alcanor's blood he had reveal'd
The dreadful purpose to Hercides——

Mab. Hah!

Mir. Hercides loves the youth, and Zaphna still
Has held him as a father.

Mab. That I like not.

What does Hercides say? thinks he with us?

Mir. Oh, no; he trembles at the very thought
Of this dread scene, compassionates Alcanor,
And——

Mab. He's but a half friend then, and a half friend
Is not a span from traitor. Mirvan, Mirvan,
A dangerous witness must be some way dwelt with——
Am I obey'd?

Mir. 'T is done.

Mab. Then for the rest——

Or e'er the harbinger of morrow's dawn
Gleam in the East, Alcanor, thou must set,
Or Mahomet and all his hopes must perish :
That 's the first step then—Zaphna, next for thee.
Soon as thy hands have dealt the midnight mischief
In thy own blood the secret must be drown'd.
Thus quit of son and father (those curst rivals
Who elbow me at once in love and grandeur)
Both Mecca and Palmira shall be mine.
Oh, tow'ring prospect ! how it fills the eye
Of my aspiring and enamour'd soul !
Night ! put on double sable, that no star
May be a spy on those dark deeds——Well, Mirvan,
Shall we accomplish this ?

Mir. We shall, my chief.

Mab. What, though I seize his life from whom she sprang ?
He's not her father as she knows it not.
Trust me, those partial ties of blood and kindred
Are but the illusive taints of education :
What we call nature is mere habit, Mirvan ;
That habit 's on our side ; for the whole study
Of this young creature's life has been obedience,
To think, believe, and act, as pleasur'd me.
But hold, the hour on which our fortune hangs
Is now at hand. While Zaphna seeks the temple
Let us look round us, see that not a wheel
Lag in the vast machine we have at work :
It is success that consecrates our actions :
The vanquish'd rebel as a rebel dies,
The victor-rebel plumes him on a throne.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

Changes to the Temple. Enter ZAPHNA with a Sword in his hand.

Zaph. Well then, it must be so ; I must discharge
This cruel duty—Mahomet enjoins it,
And Heaven through him demands it of my hands.
Horrid, though sacred act !—my soul shrinks back,
And won't admit conviction—Ay, but Heaven !
Heaven's call I must obey—Oh, dire obedience !
What dost thou cost me ! my humanity !
Why, duty, art thou thus at war with nature ?

Enter PALMIRA.

Thou here, Palmira ! oh ! what fatal transport
Leads thee to this sad place, these dark abodes,
Sacred to death ? Thou hast no bus'ness here.

Pal. Oh, Zaphna, fear and love have been my guides.
What horrid sacrifice is this enjoin'd thee ?
What victim does the god of Mahomet
Claim from thy tender hand ?

Zaph. Oh, my guardian angel,
Speak, resolve me ;
How can assassination be a virtue ?
How can the gracious parent of mankind
Delight in mankind's suff'rings ? May n't this prophet,
This great announcer of his heavenly will,
Mistake it once ?

Pal. Oh, tremble to examine.
He sees our hearts. To doubt is to blaspheme.

Zaph. Be steady then, my soul, firm to thy purpose,
And let religion steel thee against pity.
Come forth thou foe to Mahomet and Heaven,

And meet the doom thy rebel faith deserves;
Come forth, Alcanor!

Pal. Who, Alcanor!

Zaph. Yes.

Pal. The good Alcanor?

Zaph. Why d' ye call him good?

Curse on his Pagan virtues! he must die,
So Mahomet commands: and yet methinks
Some other deity arrests my arm,
And whispers to my heart—Zaphna, forbear!

Pal. Distracted state!

Zaph. Alas! my dear Palmira,
I'm weak, and shudder at this bloody bus'ness.
Help me, oh help, Palmira! I am torn,
Distracted with this conflict.
Zeal, horror, love, and pity, seize my breast,
And drag it diff'rent ways. Alas! Palmira,
You see me tossing on a sea of passions;
'T is thine, my angel, to appease this tempest,
Fix my distracted will, and teach me——

Pal. What!

What can I teach thee in this strife of passions?
Oh, Zaphna! I revere our holy prophet,
Think all his laws are register'd in Heaven,
And ev'ry mandate minted in the skies.

Zaph. But then to break through hospitality,
And murder him by whom we are protected!

Pal. Oh, poor Alcanor! gen'rous, good Alcanor!
My heart bleeds for thee.

Zaph. Know then, unless I act this horrid scene,
Unless I plunge this dagger in the breast
Of that old man, I must—I must——

Pal. What——

Zaph. Must, Palmira——

(Oh, agonizing thought!) lose thee for ever.

Pal. Am I the price of good Alcanor's blood?

Zaph. So Mahomet ordains.

Pal. Horrible dowry!

Zaph. Thou know'st the curse our prophet hath denounc'd

Of endless tortures on the disobedient?

Thou know'st with what an oath I've bound myself

To vindicate his laws, extirpate all

That dare oppose his progress: say then, fair one,

Thou tutoress divine, instruct me how—

How to obey my chief, perform my oath,

Yet list to mercy's call.

Pal. This rends my heart.

Zaph. How to avoid being banish'd thee for ever.

Pal. Oh, save me from that thought! must that e'er be?

Zaph. It must not: thou hast now pronounc'd his doom.

Pal. What doom? Have I!

Zaph. Yes, thou hast seal'd his death.

Pal. I seal his death!—Did I?

Zaph. 'T was Heaven spoke by thee; thou'rt its oracle,
And I'll fulfill its laws. This is the hour

In which he pays at the adjoining altar

Black rites to his imaginary gods.

Follow me not, Palmira!

Pal. I must follow;

I will not, dare not leave thee.

Zaph. Gentle maid,

I beg thee fly these walls; thou canst not bear

This horrid scene—Oh, these are dreadful moments!

Begone—quick—this way——

Pal. No, I follow thee,

Retread thy ev'ry footstep, though they lead
To the dark gulf of death.

Zaph. Thou matchless maid!—to the dire trial then.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

Draws and discovers the inner part of the Temple, with a Pagan Altar and Images, ALCANOR addressing himself to the Idols.

Alca. Eternal Powers! that deign to bless these mansions,
Protectors of the sons of Ishmael,
Crush, crush this blasphemous invader's force,
And turn him back with shame. If power be your's
Oh! shield your injur'd votaries, and lay
Oppression bleeding at your altar's foot.

Enter ZAPHNA and PALMIRA.

Pal. [*Entering.*] AËt not this bloody deed: Oh, save him,
save him!

Zaph. Save him, and lose both Paradise and thee!

Pal. Hah, yonder he stands—Oh! Zaphna, all my blood
Is frozen at the sight.

Alca. 'Tis in your own behalf that I implore
The terrors of your might; swift, swiftly
Pour vengeance on this vile apostate's head,
Who dares profanely wrest your thunder from you,
And lodge it with an unknown, fancy'd god.

Zaph. Hear how the wretch blasphemes! So, now——

Pal. Hold, Zaphna!

Zaph. Let me go——

Pal. I cannot—cannot.

Alca. But if, for reasons which dim-sighted mortals

Can't look into, you'll crown this daring rebel
With loyalty and priesthood, take my life :
And if, ye gracious Powers ! you've ought of bliss
In store for me, at my last hour permit me
To see my children, pour my blessing on them,
Expire in their dear arms, and let them close
These eyes, which then would wish no aftersight.

Pal. His children, did he say ?

Zaph. I think he did——

Alca. For this I'll at your altar pay my vows,
And make it smoke with incense. [*Retires behind the altar.*]

Zaph. “ Now 's the time ;” [*Drawing his sword.*]
Insulting Heaven, he flies to stones for refuge :
Now let me strike.

Pal. Stay but one moment, Zaphna.

Zaph. It must not be—unhand me.

Pal. What to do ?

Zaph. To serve my God and king, and merit thee.

[*Breaking from Palmira, and going towards the altar, he starts, and stops short.*]

Ha ! what are ye, ye terrifying shades ?
What means this lake of blood that lies before me ?

Pal. Oh, Zaphna ! let us fly these horrid roofs.

Zaph. No, no—go on, ye ministers of death ;
Lead me the way : I'll follow ye.

Pal. Stay, Zaphna ;

Heap no more horrors on me ; I'm expiring
Beneath the load.

Zaph. Be hush'd—the altar trembles !
What means that omen ! does it spur to murder,
Or would it rein me back ? No, 'tis the voice
Of Heaven itself that chides my ling'ring hand.
Now send up thither all thy vows, Palmira.

Whilst I obey its will and give the stroke.

[Goes out behind the Altar after Alcanor.]

Pal. What vows? will Heaven receive a murd'rer's vows?
For sure I'm such whilst I prevent not murder.
Why beats my heart thus? what soft voice is this
That's waken'd in my soul, and preaches mercy?
If Heaven demands his life, dare I oppose?
Is it my place to judge?—Hah! that dire groan
Proclaims the bloody bus'ness is about.
Zaphna! oh, Zaphna!

Re-enter ZAPHNA.

Zaph. Ha! where am I!
Who calls me? where's Palmira? she's not here:
What fiend has snatch'd her from me?

Pal. Heavens! he raves!
Dost thou not know me, Zaphna! her who lives
For thee alone?—Why dost thou gaze thus on me?

Zaph. Where are we?

Pal. Hast thou then discharg'd
The horrid duty?

Zaph. What dost thou say?

Pal. Alcanor——

Zaph. Alcanor! what Alcanor?

Pal. Gracious Heaven,
Look down upon him!
Let's begone, my Zaphna,
Let's fly this place.

Zaph. Oh, whither fly! to whom?
D'ye see these hands? who will receive these hands?

Pal. Oh, come, and let me wash them with my tears!

Zaph. Who art thou? let me lean on thee—I find

My powers returning. Is it thou, Palmira?
Where have I been? what have I done?

Pal. I know not:
Think on't no more.

Zaph. But I must think and talk on't too, Palmira.
I seiz'd the victim by his hoary locks——
(Thou, Heaven, didst will it)
Then, shuddering with horror, bury'd straight
The poignard in his breast, I had redoubled
The bloody plunge—(what cannot zeal persuade!)
But that the venerable sire pour'd forth
So piteous a groan! look'd so, Palmira——
And with a feeble voice cry'd, is it Zaphna?
I could no more. Oh! hadst thou seen, my love,
The fell, fell dagger in his bosom, view'd
His dying face, where sat such dignity,
Cloth'd with compassion towards his base assassin.

[Throwing himself on the ground.]

The dire remembrance weighs me to the earth——
Here let me die——

Pal. Rise, my lov'd Zaphna! rise,
And let us fly to Mahomet for protection:
If we are found in these abodes of slaughter
Tortures and death attend us: let us fly.

Zaph. *[Starting up.]* I did fly at that blasting sight, Palmira.

When drawing out the fatal steel, he cast
Such tender looks! I fled—the fatal steel,
The voice, the tender looks, the bleeding victim
Blessing his murderer, I could not fly:
No, they clung to me, riv'd my throbbing heart,
And set my brain on fire. What have we done!

Pal. Hark! what's that noise? I tremble for thy life.

Oh! in the name of love, by all the ties,
Those sacred ties that bind thee mine for ever,
I do conjure thee follow me.

[Alcanor comes from behind the altar, leaning against it, with
the bloody sword in his hand.]

Zaph. Hah! look, Palmira, see what object's that
Which bears upon my tortur'd sight? Is't he?
Or is't his bloody manes come to haunt us?

Pal. 'T is he himself, poor wretch! struggling with death,
And feebly crawling tow'rds us. Let me fly
And yield what help I can: let me support thee,
Thou much lamented, injur'd, good old man!

Zaph. Why do n't I move? my feet are rooted here,
And all my frame is struck and wither'd up
As with a lightning's blast.

Alca. My gentle maid,
Wilt thou support me?
Weep not, my Palmira.

Pal. I could weep tears of blood if that would serve thee.

*Alca. [Sitting down.] Zaphna, come hither; thou hast
ta'en my life,
For what offence, or what one thought towards thee
That anger or malevolence gave birth,
Heaven knows I am unconscious. Do not look so:
I see thou dost relent.

Enter PHARON hastily.

Pal. [Starting back.] Hah! 't is too late then.

Alca. Would I could see Hercides?—Pharon, lo
Thy martyr'd friend by his distemper'd hand
Is now expiring.

Pha. Dire unnatural crime!
Oh, wretched parricide! behold thy father. [Pointing to Alc.]

Zaph. My father !

Pal. Father ! hah !

Alca. Mysterious Heaven !

Pha. Hercides dying by the hand of Mirvan,
Who slew him lest he should betray the secret,
Saw me approach, and in the pangs of death,
Cry'd, fly and save Alcanor ; wrest the sword
From Zaphna's hands if 't is not yet too late,
That 's destin'd for his death : then let him know
That Zaphna and Palmira are his children !

Pal. That Zaphna and Palmira are his children !
Dost hear that, Zaphna ?

Zaph. 'T is enough, my fate !
Canst thou ought more ?

Alca. Oh, nature ! oh, my children ?
By what vile instigations wert thou driven,
Unhappy Zaphna ! to this bloody action !

Zaph. [*Falling at his father's feet.*] Oh, I cannot speak ;
Restore me, sir, restore that damned weapon.
That I for once may make it, as I ought,
An instrument of justice..

Pal. [*Kneeling.*] Oh, my father,
Strike here ; the crime was mine ; 't was I alone
That work'd his will to this unnat'ral deed ;
Upon these terms alone he could be mine,
And incest was the price of parricide.

Zaph. Strike your assassins——

Alca. I embrace my children,
And joy to see them, though my life 's the forfeit.
Rise, children, rise and live ; live to revenge
Your father's death—But in the name of Nature,
By the remains of this paternal blood
That 's oozing from my wound, raise not your hands

'Gainst your own being. Zaphna, wouldst thou do me
A second deadlier mischief?
Self-slaughter can't atone for parricide.

Zaph. Then I will live,
Live to some purpose: this is glorious suffering.

Alca. Thy undetermin'd arm ha' n't quite fulfill'd
Its bigot purpose; I hope to live to animate
Our friends 'gainst this impostor; lead them, Zaphna,
To root out a rapacious baneful crew,
Whose zeal is phrensy, whose religion murder.

Zaph. Swift, swift, ye hours! and light me to revenge!
Come, thou infernal weapon. [*Snatches the bloody sword.*]
I'll wash off thy foul stain with the heart's blood
Of that malignant, sanctified assassin.

As Zaphna is going off, MIRVAN and his Followers enter and stop him.

Mir. Seize Zaphna,
And load the trait'rous murderer with chains:
Help you the good Alcanor—Hapless man!
Our prophet in a vision learnt to-night
The mournful tale of thy untimely end,
And sent me straight to seize the vile assassin,
That he might wreak severest justice on him:
Mahomet comes to vindicate the laws,
Not suffer with impunity their breach.

Alca. Heavens! what accumulated crimes are here!

Zaph. Where is the monster? bear me instant to him,
That I may blast him with my eye, may curse him
With my last hesitating voice.

Pal. Thou traitor,
Did not thy own death-doing tongue enjoin
This horrid deed?

Mir. Not mine, by Heaven!

Zaph. Not thine!

Mir. No, by our prophet and his holy faith,
Of all the thoughts ere harbour'd in this breast
It ne'er had such a monster for its tenant.

Zaph. Most accomplish'd villain!

Mirvan, look at me—dar'st thou——

Mir. Off with him,

[*To the Soldiers.*

And see him well secur'd, till Mahomet
Demands him of you.

Pal. Villain, hold!

[*Laying hold of Zaphna.*

Mir. Away.

Zaph. Just, just reward of my credulity!

Pal. Let me go with him; I will share thy fate
Unhappy Zaphna, for I share thy guilt.

But then——

[*Looking back at Alcanor.*

Mir. No more—you must to Mahomet;
Obey without reluctance: our great prophet,
In pity to your tender frame and years,
Will take you under his divine protection.

Pal. [*Apart.*] Oh, death! deliver me from such protection!

Mir. If you would ought to save the destin'd Zaphna
Follow me to the prophet; you may move him
To mitigate his doom—Away.

[*To the Soldiers who hold Zaphna.*

You, this way.

[*To Pal.*

Zaph. Pardon!

Pal. Oh, pardon!

[*They are led off by degrees, looking alternately at their father and each other.*

Alca. Oh, insupportable!

Both from me torn then when I wanted most
Their consolation.

[*A shout.*]

Pha. Hark!

The citizens are rous'd and all in arms
Rush on to your defence.

Alca. Pharon, support me

Some moments longer—Help, conduct me towards them :
Bare this wound to them ; let that speak the cause,
The treach'rous cause, for words begin to fail me!
Then, if in death I can but serve my country,
Save my poor children from this tiger's gripe,
And give a second life to that lov'd pair
By whose misguided zeal I lose my own ;
What patriot or parent but would wish
In so divine a cause to fall a martyr !

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

Enter MAHOMET and MIRVAN.

Mahomet.

WRONG will be ever nurs'd and fed with blood—
So this boy bigot held his pious purpose ?

Mir. Devoutly.

Mab. What a reasonless machine
Can superstition make the reas'ner man !
Alcanor lies there on his bed of earth !

Mir. This moment he expir'd, and Mecca's youth
In vain lament their chief. To the mad crowd
That gather'd round good Ali and myself
(Full of thy dauntless heavenly-seeming spirit)
Disclaim'd the deed, and pointed out the arm
Of righteous Heaven that strikes for Mahomet—
Think ye we cry'd (with eyes and hands uprear'd)

Think ye our holy prophet would consent
 To such a crime, whose foulness casts a blot
 On right of nations, nature, and our faith?
 Oh, rather think he will revenge his death,
 And root his murd'rer from the burthen'd earth!
 Then struck our breasts, and wept the good old man,
 And only wish'd he died among the faithful,
 And slept with Ibrahim.

Mab. Excellent Mirvan!

Mir. We then both at large
 Descanted on thy clemency and bounty:
 On that the silent and desponding crowd
 Broke out in murmurs, plaints, and last, in shouts,
 And each mechanic grew a Mussulman.

Mab. Oh, worthy to deceive and awe the world,
 Second to Mahomet! let me embrace thee—
 But say is not our army at their gates
 To back our clemency?

Mir. Omar commands
 Their nightly march through unsuspected paths,
 And with the morn appears.

Mab. At sight of them
 The weak remaining billows of this storm
 Will lash themselves to peace—But where is Zaphna?

Mir. Safe in a dungeon where he dies apace,
 Unconscious of his fate: for well thou know'st
 Ere at the altar's foot he slew his sire
 In his own veins he bore his guilt's reward,
 A deadly draught of poison.

Mab. I would be kind, and let him die deceiv'd,
 Nor know that parent-blood defiles his soul.

Mir. He cannot know it: if the grave be silent
 I'm sure Hercides is——

Mab. Unhappy Zaphna!

Something like pity checks me for thy death.
 But why—I must not think that way—shall Mahomet
 Give a new Paradise to all mankind,
 And let remorse of conscience be the hell
 Of his own breast! My safety claim'd his life,
 And all the heaven of fair Palmira's charms
 Shall be my great reward.

Mer. My noble lord,
 Palmira is at hand, and waits your pleasure.

Mab. At hand! How, Mirvan, couldst thou let me talk
 On themes of guilt when that pure angel's near?

Mir. The weeping fair, led on by flatt'ring hope
 Of Zaphna's life, attends your sacred will:
 A silent pale dejection shrouds her cheeks,
 And, like the lily in a morning shower,
 She droops her head and locks up all her sweets.

Mab. Say Mahomet awaits, and then
 Assemble all our chiefs, and on this platform
 Let them attend me straight.

[*Exit Mir.*

Enter PALMIRA with Attendants.

Pal. [*Apart.*] Where have they led me?
 Methinks each step I take, the mangled corpse
 Of my dear father (by poor Zaphna mangled)
 Lies in my way, and all I see is blood—— [Starting.
 'T is the impostor's self!—Burst heart, in silence.

Mab. Maid, lay aside this dread. Palmira's fate
 And that of Mecca by my will is fix'd.
 This great event, that fills thy soul with horror
 Is mystery to all but Heaven and Mahomet.

Pal. Oh, ever righteous Heaven! canst thou suffer
 This sacrilegious hypocrite, this spoiler,
 To steal thy terrors, and blaspheme thy name,
 Nor doom him instant dead?

[*Aside.*

Mab. Child of my care,
At length from galling chains I've set thee free,
And made thee triumph in a just revenge;
Think then thou 'rt dear to me, and Mahomet
Regards thee with a more than father's eye:
Then know (if thou 'lt deserve the mighty boon)
An higher name, a nobler fate, awaits thee.

Pal. What would the tyrant?—

Mab. Raise thy thoughts to glory,
And sweep this Zaphna from thy memory,
With all that's past—Let that mean flame expire
Before the blaze of empire's radiant sun.
Thy grateful heart must answer to my bounties,
Follow my laws, and share in all my conquests.

Pal. What laws, what bounties, and what conquest, tyrant?
Fraud is thy law, the tomb thy only bounty,
Thy conquests fatal as infected air,
Dispeopling half the globe—See here, good Heaven!
The venerable prophet I rever'd,
The king I serv'd, the god that I ador'd.

Mab. [*Approaching her.*] Whence this unwonted language,
this wild frenzy?

Pal. Where is the spirit of my martyr'd father?
Where Zaphna's? where Palmira's innocence?
Blasted by thee, by thee, infernal monster—
Thou found'st us angels, and hast made us fiends:
Give, give us back our lives, our fame, our virtue:
Thou canst not, tyrant—yet thou seek'st my love,
Seek'st with Alcanor's blood his daughter's love.

Mab. [*Apart.*] Horror and death! the fatal secret's known.

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Oh, Mahomet, all's lost, thy glory tarnish'd,
And th' insatiate tomb ripe to devour us!

Hercides' parting breath divulg'd the secret,
 The prison's forc'd, the city all in arms:
 See where they bear aloft their murder'd chief,
 Fell Zaphna in their front, death in his looks,
 Rage all his strength. Spite of the deadly draught
 He holds in life but to make sure of vengeance.

Mab. What dost thou hear then? instant with our guards,
 Attempt to stem their progress, till the arrival
 Of Omar with the troops.

Mir. I haste, my lord.

[*Exit Mir.*]

Pal. Now, now, my hour's at hand.
 Hear'st thou those shouts that rend the ambient air?
 Seest thou those glancing fires that add new horrors
 To the night's gloom? fresh from thy murd'ring poignard,
 (For thine it was, though Zaphna gave the blow)
 My father's spirit leads the vengeful shades
 Of all the wretches whom thy sword has butcher'd:
 I see them raise their unsubstantial arms
 To snatch me from thy rage, or worse, thy love.
 Shadows shall conquer in Palmira's cause.

Mab. [*Apart.*] What terror's this that hangs upon her accents!
 I feel her virtue, though I know her weakness.

Pal. Thou ask'st my love, go seek it in the grave
 Of good Alcanor—Talk'st of grateful minds,
 Bid Zaphna plead for thee, and I may hear thee:
 Till then thou art my scorn—May'st thou, like me,
 Behold thy dearest blood spilt at thy feet,
 Mecca, Medina, all our Asian world,
 Join, join to drive th' impostor from the earth,
 Blush at his chains, and shake them off in vengeance!

Mab. [*Apart.*] Be still, my soul, nor let a woman's rage
 Ruffle thy wonted calm—Spite of thy hate
 Thou'rt lovely still, and charming even in madness.

[*A shout and noise of fighting.*]

My fair, retire; nor let thy gentle soul
Shake with alarms: thou'rt my peculiar care:
I go to quell this trait'rous insurrection,
And will attend thee straight.

Pal. No, tyrant, no;
I'll join my brother, help to head our friends
And urge them on. [*A shout.*
Roll, roll your thunders, Heavens, and aid the storm!
Now hurl your lightning on the guilty head,
And plead the cause of injur'd innocence. [*Exit Pal.*

Enter ALI.

Mab. Whence, Ali, that surprise?

Ali. My royal chief,
The foe prevails—Thy troops, led on by Mirvan,
Are all cut off, and valiant Mirvan's self,
By Zaphna slain, lies weltring in his blood:
The guard that to our arms should ope the gates,
Struck with the common frenzy, vow thy ruin,
And death and vengeance is the gen'ral cry.

Mab. Can Ali fear? then, Mahomet, be thyself.

Ali. See, thy few friends, whom wild despair hath arm'd,
(But arm'd in vain) are come to die beside thee.

Mab. Ye heartless traitors! Mahomet alone
Shall be his own defender, and your guard
Against the crowds of Mecca—Follow me.

*Enter ZAPHNA, PALMIRA, and PHARON, with Citizens,
and the body of Alcanor on a bier.*

Ha!

Zaph. See, my friends, where the impostor stands
With head erect, as if he knew not guilt;
As if no tongue spake from Alcanor's wound,
Nor call'd for vengeance on him.

Mab. Impious man!

Is't not enough to have spilt thy parent's blood,
But, with atrocious and blaspheming lips
Dar'st thou arraign the substitute of Heaven?

Zaph. The substitute of Heaven! so is the sword,
The pestilence, the famine; such art thou:
Such are the blessings Heaven has sent to man
By thee, its delegate; nay more, to me.
Oh, he took pains, Palmira, upon us,
Deluded us into such monstrous crimes,
As nature sicken'd at conception of?—
How couldst thou damn us thus?

Mab. Babbler, avaunt!

Zaph. Well thou upbraidst me, for to parley with thee
Half brands me coward. Oh, revenge me, friends!
Revenge Alcanor's massacre; revenge
Palmira's wrongs, and crush the rancorous monster.

Mab. Hear me, ye slaves! born to obey my will.

Pal. Ah, hear him not! fraud dwells upon his tongue.

Zaph. Have at thee, fiend!—Ha! Heaven,

[*Zaphna advancing, reels, and reclines on his sword.*

What cloud is this

That thwarts upon my sight? my head grows dizzy;
My joints unloose; sure 'tis the stroke of fate.

Mab. [*Aside.*] The poison works!—then triumph,
Mahomet!

Zaph. Off! off! base lethargy.

Pal. Brother, dismay'd!

Hast thou no power but in a guilty cause,
And only strength to be a parricide?

Zaph. Spare that reproach—Come on—it will not be.

[*Hangs down his sword, and reclines on Pharon.*

Some cruel power unnerves my willing arm,
Blasts my resolves, and weighs me down to earth.

Mab. Such be the fate of all who brave our law.
Nature and death have heard my voice, and now
Let Heaven be judge 'twixt Zaphna and myself,
And instant blast the guilty of the two.

Pal. Brother! oh, Zaphna!

Zaph. Zaphna now's no more.

[*Sinking down by Alcanor's body, and leaning on the bier,*

Pharon kneeling down with him, and supporting him.

Down, down, good Pharon—Thou, poor injur'd corse,
May I embrace thee? Won't thy pallid wound
Purple anew at the unnatural touch,
And ooze fresh calls for vengeance?

Pal. Oh, my brother!

Zaph. In vain's the guiltless meaning of my heart:

High Heaven detests th' involuntary crime,
And dooms for parricide—Then tremble, tyrant!

If the Supreme can punish error thus,

What new-invented tortures must await

Thy soul, grown leprous with such foul offences?

But soft—now fate and nature are at strife——

Sister, farewell! with transport should I quit

This toilsome, perilous, delusive stage,

But that I leave thee on't—leave thee, Palmira,

Expos'd to what is worse than fear can image,

That tyrant's mercy: but I know thee brave—

Know that thou'lt act a part——Look on her, Heaven!

Guide her, and—oh! [Dies.

Pal. Think not, ye men of Mecca,

This death's inflicted by the hand of Heaven:

'T is he—that viper——

Mab. Know, ye faithless wretches!

'T is mine to deal the bolts of angry Heaven:

Behold them there, and let the wretch who doubts

Tremble at Zaphna's fate, and know that Mahomet
Can read his thoughts, and doom him with a look.
Go, then, and thank your pontiff and your prince
For each day's sun he grants you to behold.
Hence to your temples, and appease my rage.

[*The people go off.*]

Pal. Ah, stay! my brother's murder'd by this tyrant:
By poison not by piety he kills.

Mab. 'Tis done—Thus ever be our law receiv'd! [*Apart.*]
Now, fair Palmira——

Pal. Monster! is it thus
Thou mak'st thyself a god, by added crimes,
And murders justify'd by sacrilege?

Mab. Think, exquisite Palmira! for thy sake——

Pal. Thou'st been the murderer of all my race.
See where Alcanor, see where Zaphna lies:
Do they not call for me too at thy hands?
Oh, that they did!——But I can read thy thoughts;
Palmira's sav'd for something worse than death;
This to prevent——Zaphna, I follow thee.

[*Stabs herself with Zaphna's sword.*]

Mab. What hast thou done!

Pal. A deed of glory, tyrant!
Thou'st left no object worth Palmira's eye,
And when I shut out light I shut out thee—— [*Dies.*]

Mab. Farewell, dear victim of my boundless passion;
The price of treachery, the reward of murder,
Sink with thee to the earth——Oh, justice, justice!
In vain are glory, worship, and dominion.
All conq'ror as I am I am a slave,
And, by the world ador'd, dwell with the damn'd.
My crimes have planted scorpions in my breast——
Here, here, I feel them. 'Tis in vain to brave

The host of terrors that invade my soul :
I might deceive the world, myself I cannot.

Ali. Be calm awhile, my lord ; think what you are.

Mab. Ha ! what am I ? *[Turning to the bodies.]*

Ye breathless family,

Let your loud crying wounds say what I am.

Oh ! snatch me from that sight ; quick, quick transport me

To nature's loneliest mansion, where the sun

Ne'er enter'd, where the sound of human tread

Was never heard——But wherefore ? still I there,

There still shall find myself——Ay, that's the hell——

I'll none on't.—— *[Drawing his sword.]*

Ali. Heavens ! help, hold him ! *[Ali, &c. disarm him.]*

Mab. Paltry dastards !

You fled the foe but can disarm your master.

Angel of death, whose power I've long proclaim'd,

Now aid me if thou canst ; now if thou canst

Draw the kind curtain of eternal night

And shroud me from the horrors that beset me.

[Exeunt Mahomet, &c.]

Pha. Oh ! what a curse is life, when self conviction

Flings our offences hourly in our face,

And turns existence torturer to itself !

Here let the mad enthusiast turn his eyes,

And see from bigotry what horrors rise,

Here in the blackest colours let him read

That zeal, by craft misled, may act a deed

By which both innocence and virtue bleed. *[Exeunt omnes.]*

EPILOGUE.

Originally spoken by Mr. GARRICK.

*LONG has the shameful licence of the age
With senseless ribaldry disgrac'd the stage ;
So much indecencies have been in vogue
They pleaded custom in an Epilogue,
As if the force of reason was a yoke
So heavy—they must ease it with a joke ;
Disarm the moral of its virtuous way,
Or else the audience go displeas'd away.
How have I blush'd to see a tragic queen
With ill-tim'd mirth, disgrace the well-wrote scene,
From all the sad solemnity of woe
Trip nimbly forth—to ridicule a beau ;
Then, as the loosest airs she had been gleaning,
Coquette the fan, and leer a double meaning !
Shame on those arts that prostitute the bays !
Shame on the bard who this way hopes for praise !
The bold but honest Author of to-night
Disdains to please you if he please not right ;
If, in his well-meant scene you chance to find
Aught to ennoble or enlarge the mind,
If he has found the means, with honest art,
To fix the noblest wishes in the heart,
In softer accents to inform the fair
How bright they look when virtue drops the tear,
Enjoy with friendly welcome the repast,
And keep the heartfelt relish to the last.*

